

Lenten Practice for today: Pray for your enemies

[from *40 Ideas for Keeping a Holy Lent* from Nadia Bolz-Weber is the founding Pastor at House for All Sinners and Saints in Denver, Colorado — an urban liturgical community with a progressive yet deeply rooted theological imagination. Learn more at www.houseforall.org and www.nadiabolzweber.com]

Mark 1:9-13:

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' ¹²And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. ¹³He was in the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

The wilderness is a familiar archetype for Lent. Each of us has a wilderness within—a barren place, a place where emotions or assumptions are not resolved, where hope feels like a fantasy and resentment resides, where our sense of purpose is fragile. Each of us also has a wilderness just over the horizon of our everyday lives. It may be a soup kitchen or a community shelter, a neglected relationship or an abandoned source of joy, a cluttered room or a postponed delight. Rebecca Lyman has described the “wilderness in our souls” as the place/time when *we survived and found unexpected grace. The wilderness within ultimately sets us free . . . When our expectations are shattered, we receive the unexpected. We are bewildered by grace.* (www.journeywithjesus.net, February 21, 2010). Lent is the time to go to this place, to be *bewildered* by grace.

Our nation is now in a wilderness.

And it is up to us—to all faith communities—to remember this.

The wilderness is by its very nature a temporary abode, a place of transition and testing.

It is by its very nature a place outside the laws and norms of community life.

The wilderness is not a safe place, but it is also not an unnatural place.

It is integral to our spiritual and cultural geography.

To say that our nation is in the wilderness is to say that the current state of affairs is neither normal nor permanent. To be in the wilderness does not mean we are on the road to perdition or that we have lost our way. Rather, In the clamor of dishonesty and anger we seem unable to hear the differences between the taunts of demons who tempt us and the voices of the angels who minister to us.

Faith communities must be clear about this: Rather than joining in the angry finger-pointing, we must allow ourselves to be “bewildered by grace,” to listen to unfamiliar voices, to *be* a new kind of sign.

For this reason, this year-- of all years--it is important that each of us have a Lenten discipline. It will be a way of remembering and reclaiming our bonds with strangers. It will be a way of silencing the clamor of dishonesty and anger so that angels can minister to us. It will be a means of restoration that will change the world.

The Rev. Dr. Judith Lee
Interim Pastor
Grace Church/La Gracia Episcopal Church
33 Church Street
White Plains, NY 10601

www.gracechurchwhiteplains.org

914.949.2874

cell:716.949.8194